



PREVENTION \* LAW ENFORCEMENT \* RESEARCH

# Maine Fire Marshal News

State Fire Marshal's Office • Fire Research  
Maine Department of Public Safety  
Mainefiremarshal.com

September 2006

Fall 2006 Vol. 1, Issue No.3

## WELCOME!

Welcome again to another edition of the Maine Fire Marshal News. We do appreciate the many comments and inquiries made with regard to articles posted in previous editions. However, it is more critical that all readers hear from you and we wish to encourage all of you who read the newsletter to submit your own articles on topics you believe would interest your colleagues from around Maine. Remember the DHS Fire Prevention and Safety Grant program is going to be accepting applications this month. Consider applying and don't forget to use your MEFIRS data in making your needs assessment.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

Fire Prevention Week is October 8 – 14 and this year's theme is cooking fires. Fire Prevention week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 (for which there is no documented proof of bovine involvement). The first official observance of Fire Prevention Week was in October of 1922 and beginning in

1957 a theme has been focused on as part of the week's activities. This year that theme is cooking fires and it's a very pertinent theme at that.

According to the NFPA cooking equipment was involved in 118,700 reported home structure fires in 2003. These fires resulted in 250 fatalities, 3,880 injuries and approximately \$512 million in direct property damage. The leading factor in these fires is equipment being unattended followed by combustibles being too close to a heat source. Statistics from the National Fire Data Center (USFA) reveal similar factors contributing to cooking fires. According to USFA statistics for 2002, nearly fifty percent of cooking fires occurred in one and two family dwellings followed by multifamily units that comprise another third of all cooking fires. However, only 4% of fire deaths result from cooking related fires, which is a sharp contrast to deaths due to incendiary, smoking and heating related fires. This is likely due to the fact that most cooking fires occur at times when people are awake. On the other hand, 25% of injuries are a result from cooking incidents and that puts cooking fire injuries first in the injuries category.

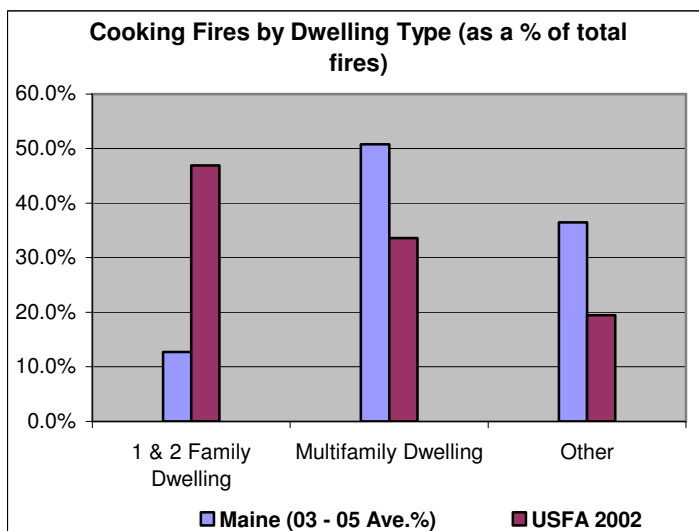
At the Fire Marshal's Office we like to look at national data but always find ourselves asking the same question: "What's happening in Maine?" So let's compare the USFA cooking fire stats for 2002 with cooking fires in Maine from 2003

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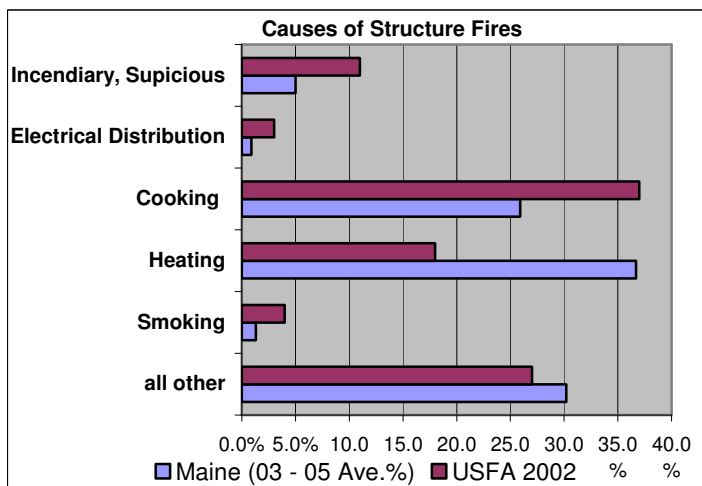
– 2005. We looked at the Maine Fire Incident Reporting System data, totaled the averages and divided for the three years. With regard to cooking fires by dwelling type, Figure 1, we see that what is happening nationally is not what we see in Maine. In contrast to the nation, most cooking fires in Maine occurred in multi-family as opposed to the one and two family dwellings.

Figure 1



In comparing the two data sets for structure fire cause we see that cooking, as it is nationally, has a high frequency. In Maine only heating related fires exceeded cooking as a cause for structure fires. Note how low (see figure 2) smoking ranks in

Figure 2



contrast to cooking as a cause of structure

fires. Yet, as we see nationally, the number of deaths related to cooking is much lower than the counts we see related to smoking.

In terms of overall incidents, injuries and deaths the picture in Maine is set out in figure 3 below. In concluding, cooking fires may not take as many lives as

Figure 3

Cooking Fires			
Year	Freq	Fatals	Injuries
2003	282	1	1
2004	555	2	4
2005	493	1	2

Though not all the result of cooking related fires, more home fires in Maine originated in the kitchen than any other room.

Source: MEFIRS & SFMO Investigations

smoking and heating related incidents but they are very frequent and with frequency the property loss level

risers and becomes an issue for Maine's fire service. As someone who loves to cook I urge you to eat well but watch what you heat.

Sincerely,  
John C. Dean  
State Fire Marshal

## NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FIRE MARSHALS ELECTS NEW OFFICERS: MAINE FIRE MARSHAL JOHN C. DEAN ASSUMES ROLE AS NEW PRESIDENT

By Richard E. Taylor, Research and Planning Analyst

Maine's State Fire Marshal John Dean has been elected to succeed New York State Fire Administrator James A. Burns as president of the National Association of State Fire Marshals. Dean will oversee NASFM's efforts to protect life, property, and the environment.

NASFM's membership comprises the most senior fire officials in the United States and is known internationally for its work in residential fire safety, the prevention of catastrophic fires, transportation and energy safety.

In recent years NASFM efforts have included building a partnership with the Department of Transportation to improve the level of firefighter and community safety by working to reduce the level of fatalities, injuries, property loss and damage to the environment associated with pipeline fires and a research project assessing juvenile fire setting and approaches used to address that issue.

Fire Marshal Dean will serve a two-year term as President of NAFSM. You can obtain additional information about the National Association of State Fire Marshal's over the internet at [www.firemarshals.org](http://www.firemarshals.org)

## **DHS FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY GRANT YIELDS RESULTS IN HERMON**

By Richard E. Taylor, Research and Planning Analyst

With funds received through a 2005 DHS Fire Prevention and Safety Grant, the Hermon Maine Fire Department installed smoke alarms with 10-year lithium batteries in every residence in Hermon, a town of about 4,400 people. The outcome was outstanding.

One installation was done for a family of six living in a two level dwelling. On December 27, 2005 at 3:42AM the Hermon FD responded to a call regarding smoke in the basement of

**"It was a classic class II, non-proximate fire."  
"...due to the efforts of the Hermon FD and the family, the pre-ignition environment was such that the mother and five children were alerted in time and...evacuated promptly."**

this home that was due to a malfunctioning furnace. It was a classic class II, non-proximate fire. In addition, you had only the mother at home with five children.

Fortunately due to the efforts of the Hermon FD and the family, the pre-ignition environment was such that the mother and five children were alerted in time and evacuated promptly. The fire destroyed



most of the second floor and could easily have taken lives and put Hermon firefighters at additional risk.

The Hermon FD carefully assessed their fire risks and weighed the costs and benefits of what they could do to reduce those risks. Their decision has proven to be a good one. Congratulations to Chief Willis and his staff.

Lt. Kelli Leighton installed the smoke alarm at the residence where the fire occurred two months earlier

## **FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE RECEIVES 2005 FIRE PREVENTION AND SAFETY GRANT**

By Richard E. Taylor, Research and Planning Analyst

Speaking of grants, the Fire Marshal's Office has received \$41,828.00 from the 2005 DHS Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program. We hope our efforts will show the same success as those we've seen in Hermon.

The Fire Marshal will collaborate with other organizations focused on injury prevention and develop a program to assess Maine's fire burden and target programming to reduce the frequency

of fire injury and fatality among our most vulnerable citizens. Of particular focus will be Maine's elderly citizens who experience a fire fatality rate that is higher than the national rate for seniors and reflects the age dimension of Maine's changing demography. Funds will also be used to assess and contribute to reducing the frequency of incidents in which children are involved in the ignition of a fire.

The funds will also further the development geodatabases that identify concentrations of vulnerable populations and purchase a hazard house display with a special senior citizens package and Midas Touch video display to deliver public education and awareness programming to the elderly and children in Maine. Funds will also be used to further the development of a fire burden assessment model that will drive future fire prevention and safety initiatives and policy.

The Department of Homeland Security and the United States Fire Administration administer the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. For more information on the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, visit the DHS Website at [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://www.firegrantsupport.com)

**COALITION**  
for **FIRE-SAFE**  
**CIGARETTES**

.....  
The time is now.

<http://www.firesafecigarettes.org/>

## **FALL FIRE ISSUES**

By Richard E. Taylor, Research and Planning Analyst

Fall is beautiful in Maine but as seasons change the type of fire concerns change as well. Lets look at the fire service fall response by examining a couple of statistics from the MEFIRS 2005 data.

In terms of responses, Maine Fire Departments responded to 67,522 calls in 2005. 21.5% of those calls took place during the fall months. Of total calls for 2005, 3989 were fire incident calls. 17.5% of those fire calls took place during the fall months.

In terms of fire fatality, October was the leading month for fatalities in a study done recently focusing on fire fatality between 1983 and 1992. In 2005, there were a total of 23 fire fatalities and 30% of those occurred in the fall months. As might be expected, 35% of fatalities occurred during the winter. So the fall has a relatively low level of incidence but a high level of fatalities. Why?

In 2005 heating related causes were identified in 42% of residential structure fires. Heating and smoking have been the leading causes of fires that resulted in fatalities as well. In 2005 three of the seven fall fire fatalities were determined to have been caused by heating. It is important for fire service people from around Maine to remind people of these key points to preventing fires related to heating:

- Have your chimney cleaned at minimum and we recommend having them inspected;
- Have your regular furnace or woodstove inspected to make sure it's operating appropriately (this can save you money too!);
- Don't burn green wood in a wood stove;

*Fall Fire Issues cont'd from page 4*

- Don't use an accelerant to ignite a wood stove;
- Keep combustibles away from all heating devices regardless of the fuel being used;

In addition, let's learn from the Hermon Fire department and make sure you have smoke alarms or detectors in place that are operating and on October 29<sup>th</sup>, change the batteries in your smoke alarm or detector. Finally make sure you have an evacuation plan in place and practice it before you need it! These few tips could save lives in the coming cold months.

## **STATE FIRE MARSHAL TO INCORPORATE ASTM RULES FOR MECHANICAL RIDES**

By Richard E. Taylor, Research and Planning Analyst

The Fire Marshal's Office and Maine State Police drew some media attention recently with the discovery of numerous transportation safety violations with vehicles transporting mechanical fair rides. These violations preceded delays in opening the fair rides to the public when the Fire Marshal's Office inspectors proceeded to carefully inspect the rides for operational safety issues as well.

Needless to say, many were not happy with the scrutiny applied by the bureaus from the Department of Public Safety though others expressed appreciation. Maine joins a number of other states including New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and others who have found problems with some carnival operators. The new incorporation of ASTM standards to mechanical rides in Maine will hopefully change, for the better, the operation and maintenance of such rides and in doing so, keep Maine citizens free from injuries that have occurred though infrequently.

The ASTM (American Society for Testing and Materials) essentially bridges what the manufacturer of a given ride has engineered into that ride with regard to operational integrity with how the owner/operator sets up, maintains and operates the ride on an ongoing basis. By incorporating the ASTM standards for Amusement Rides and Devices, the operator will be required to demonstrate with documentation (fact sheet) that they are familiar with the manufacturers operating instructions and specifications.

The key element to meeting the new standards will be documentation. Owner operators who possess the documents essential to demonstrate an understanding of the manufacturers intended parameters for the operation of the given ride will have no problem. In addition to operations documentation it will be essential to demonstrate that the owner/operator has maintained the manufacturers specifications when repairing or making modifications to the given ride.

Maine has been fortunate to experience few major injuries on amusement rides operated in the State. This is not the case in other states though the volume of use in many states dwarfs what we see in Maine. Still it is important to remember that tragic accidents can happen and with that in mind, work to make sure it doesn't happen here.

## **GOVERNOR BALDACCIO TO PROCLAIM OCTOBER 8 – 14, 2006 FIRE PREVENTION WEEK THROUGHOUT MAINE**

By Richard E. Taylor, Research and Planning Analyst

Governor Baldacci will issue a notice proclaiming October 8 – 14 Fire Prevention Week in Maine. The proclamation will acknowledge the serious public safety



Governors Proclamation cont'd from page 5

issue of fire at the local, state and national level and recognize the dedication of Maine's fire service in protecting Maine citizens from the dangers posed by fire to life and property.

## UPCOMING EVENTS



***play safe! be safe!®***  
September 20, 2006

Safe this Date! The State Fire Marshal will host a videoconference workshop of ***play safe! be safe!®*** from Florian Hall in Augusta to Portland, Bangor, and Presque Isle, locations TBA.

This workshop will provide a fascinating and entertaining look into the preschool child's perception of fire, the surprising frequency of children's misuse of fire, practical approaches to teach young children fire safety, and introduction to the award winning ***play safe! be safe!®*** kit. This event is co-sponsored by the Office of the State Fire Marshal, MRDC, Inc., WCSH 6 TV, Head Start, Maine Fire Training & Education, and Maine Injury Prevention (MECDC).

There will be a morning session 9:30 – 12:30 for teachers and other direct care providers and an afternoon session, 1:30 – 3:00, for trainers (who must also attend the 9:30 sessions).

The fee to attend will be \$10.00 and will include the kit (a \$60.00 value). For more information regarding registration contact:

Richard E. Taylor, R&P Analyst

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The 26th Annual Mid-Coast EMS Seminar will be held on November 9 – 12, at the Samoset Resort in Rockport, Maine. For more information go to: [www.midcoastems.org](http://www.midcoastems.org)

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The 18th Annual Pine Tree Burn Foundation Fire and Life Safety Conference will take place in Bar Harbor, Maine on October 19 – 21 at the Atlantic Oakes Resort and Conference Center. For more information go to:

<http://www.ellsworthme.org/ptbf/2006brochure.doc>

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Maine Code Officials Multi Issue Workshop  
2006  
November 2nd and 3rd  
Black Bear Inn  
Orono, Maine

For more information go to:

[http://www.state.me.us/spo/ceo/training/multi\\_2006.pdf](http://www.state.me.us/spo/ceo/training/multi_2006.pdf)

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Training on Fire Wall Construction Issues  
Presented by Plans Reviewer Richard McCarthy and  
Chirs Allington of the Hilti Corporation

September 26, 2006

Edmunds Conference Center  
Northern Maine Community College  
33 Edgemont Drive, Presque Isle

***Upcoming Events cont'd from page 6***

Fire Walls Construction Seminar Contact: Fire Inspector Gregory Day at 532-5407 or [Gregory.j.day@maine.gov](mailto:Gregory.j.day@maine.gov) for more information.

**NFPA Seminar  
November 16<sup>th</sup> & 17th  
8:00 AM - 4:30 PM  
FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE  
MAINE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY  
FLORIAN HALL**

**National Fire Protection Association Representative Jim Dolan and Richard Bielen will conduct a seminar on NFPA 99, Standard for Health Care Facilities, 2005 edition, November 16th and a seminar on NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code, 2006 edition**

Contact: Richard Taylor at 626-3873 or [richard.e.taylor@maine.gov](mailto:richard.e.taylor@maine.gov) You can download your registration forms by going to [www.maine-firemarshal.com](http://www.maine-firemarshal.com)

The ***Maine Fire Marshal News*** is an electronic publication of the Maine State Fire Marshal's Office.

Editors: Richard E. Taylor & Lori Gunn

To submit articles for publication contact the Fire Marshal's Office at (207) 626-3870 and ask to speak with the editors. You may also e-mail an article or comment to [Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov](mailto:Richard.e.taylor@maine.gov)

All articles are subject to an editorial staff review prior to inclusion. For a copy of submission requirements contact the editorial staff.

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